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Jessica M. Keady, Vulnerability and Valour: A Gendered  
Analysis of Everyday Life in the Dead Sea Scrolls Communities  
[Book review]

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## Book Review

**Jessica M. Keady, *Vulnerability and Valour: A Gendered Analysis of Everyday Life in the Dead Sea Scrolls Communities* (Library of Second Temple Studies 91; London and New York: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2017). ISBN 978-0-567-67224-7. 240 pages.**

This book will hopefully be read widely since it also teaches biblical scholars some central aspects of gender theory, embodiment, and research on the everyday. Some of these already belong to the social-scientifically informed conceptual toolkits, but even if not all scholars find them necessary or useful, they are parts of a wider discourse in the field and known to more and more students in one way or the other.

Jessica Keady opens up new avenues in Dead Sea Scrolls research by using masculinity studies to explore a selection of Qumran texts, thus joining other recent research on masculinity. Whereas women in the Scrolls have been a standard topic in the past, as well as purity and impurity conceptualization, now the focus is on neither specifically but rather on gendered presentation and performance of both. Masculinity could be explored for both males and females, but here the focus is more on the male side. Keady also takes a critical stance towards earlier studies by arguing that there is no evidence for celibacy in the Scrolls communities; instead, both women and men could have held ideals of (temporary) abstinence. She also adheres the recent developments in Qumran scholarship to see diverse groups in the Scrolls.

The book is structured in three theory-oriented chapters, three text-oriented chapters, and conclusions. Chapter 1 is Introduction. Chapter 2 divides Scrolls scholarship in three phases, 1947–1969, 1970–1989, 1990–present, to review debates on women and purity. Chapter 3 introduces three main theoretical frameworks used in the study: masculinity studies with Raewyn Connell, study of embodiment with Stevi Jackson, Sue Scott, and Judith Butler, and theory of the everyday with Susie Scott. Chapter 4 addresses masculinity in the Community Rule 1QS and War Scroll 1QM. Chapter 5 is an embodied reading on several halakhic texts (Damascus Document from Cave 4; 4QTohorot A). Chapter 6 discusses the everyday in light of the Temple Scroll 11QT<sup>a</sup> and the Rule of the Congregation 1QSa.

According to Keady, the entrance ritual of 1QS reveals ideals of hegemonic masculinity and places men in a frustratingly static and hierarchical order where the right state of mind and ethical standards are difficult to attain. Here, I would have expected more elaborate discussion on the ranking system where it is the priests who set the standard as well as on the annual renewal of membership which probably meant that the ranking was not determined for a lifetime. Also the drawing of the contours of the hegemonic ideal in the ancient world would benefit from more dialogue with other studies in the field to reveal the range of possible hegemonic masculinities.

The central and innovative argument is that the purity rules constraining the movement and activities of both men and women could actually be empowering for women who gained more control of their bodies during the purification period but exposing men to vulnerability since their uncontrolled impurity and its consequences for daily life were considered as embarrassing, if not harmful. For example, in relation to war, impurity made men's masculinity vulnerable. How uncontrollable the male impurity may have been remains undiscussed and could be open to debate. The discussion on the halakhic details, especially of texts like 4Q274, are hard to follow, even for specialists, and the important distinctions, like that of a *zav* and a man with emission of semen, are not fully addressed in relation to everyday life (how many males faced the situation of being a *zav*?). The overall argument seeks to turn upside down the common perception of an uncontrollable leaky, menstruating female body and a controlled, contained male body, and show how the impurity state brought males to the level of females and created a sense of gender equality. The graded impurity as testified in some of the Scrolls did not set male and female bodies in opposition to each other but rather the pure and the impure, whether male or female.

Keady describes the impurity position with words like "shame and loneliness" (137). This is significant since it is often held that the impurity system was a normal part of everyday life and as such nothing shameful. Yet we know that the connection between impurity and sin is often made in ancient texts; perhaps the masculinity perspective contributes to our understanding of this aspect as well, although it may be that, in general, this connection is more often explicitly made with the females than the males.

For scholars of ancient texts, it is customary to acknowledge that the preserved ancient textual evidence primarily reflects the elite's way of thinking. However, Keady argues for the opposite: the Dead Sea Scrolls reveal something of the ordinary people's lives. The utopian or idealized texts such as the Temple Scroll and the Rule of the Congregation are not the most obvious choices to look at the everyday and the mundane, but Keady justifies her choice by taking fantasies to reveal the ideals held in the everyday. Thus the Temple Scroll reveals the metaphorical isolation of both males and females during their time of impurity. The Rule of the Congregation, even with the gender-inclusive reading, reveals how women are constructed mainly in pre-determined roles as mothers and wives, but also as educators and legal contributors.

The many-sided theoretical framework is employed throughout the book but it sometimes becomes repetitive. It is not always clear to this reader what new and specific each analytical tools brings and how they are distinguished from each other. Keady ambitiously wishes to "avoid generalizing statements relating to the two sexes" (58), referring to the importance of understanding the fleshy experiences of embodiment and the varying context in which construction of gender takes place, but does she succeed? It is not easy to identify fleshy experiences in the often polished and genre-specific texts. To me, another question is to what extent taking the everyday as disrupted and troubled by impurity is helpful. From another angle, ritualization of the everyday practices may reveal concerns in the society that are solved by adding ritual elements and thus gaining control – often enabling a feeling of control of something uncontrollable.

Jessica Keady's book is an excellent and promising exemplar of interdisciplinary, social-scientifically oriented direction of research which should be discussed in both Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship and beyond: in humanities and in present-day reflections of gender and its changing constructions.

Jutta Jokiranta